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Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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R 220011Z APR 78
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WHITEHOUSE
USINT HAVANA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 USUN NEW YORK 01596

EXDIS

WHITE HOUSE PLEASE PASS NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CU, US
SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH CUBAN AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED NATIONS

1. SUMMARY: AMBASSADOR YOUNG HAD LUNCH THURSDAY, APRIL 20, IN THE UNITED NATIONS DELEGATES DINING ROOM WITH THE NEW CUBAN AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED NATIONS, RAOUL ROA, AND TEOFILO ACOSTA OF THE CUBAN INTEREST SECTION IN WASHINGTON. ROA EXPRESSED PLEASURE AT MEETING AMBASSADOR YOUNG ON HIS FIRST OFFICIAL DAY AS HEAD OF THE CUBAN DELEGATION TO THE UN AND CONFIRMED THAT PRIME MINISTER CASTRO WELCOMED A VISIT FROM AMBASSADOR YOUNG TO CUBA WHEREBY THEY MIGHT TALK ABOUT NORMALIZING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES AND AFRICAN ISSUES. ROA ASKED IF PRESIDENT CARTER'S STATEMENT CATEGORIZING CUBANS IN AFRICA AS MERCENARIES REPRESENTED A SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE IN PRESIDENT CARTER'S ATTITUDE. ACOSTA FOLLOWED WITH A QUESTION ABOUT A REFERENCE TO CUBAN TROOPS AS PROXIES IN ETHIOPIA. END SUMMARY

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2. ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, APRIL 19, TEOFILO ACOSTA CALLED TO ARRANGE A LUNCH WITH AMBASSADOR YOUNG AND THE NEW CUBAN AMABASSADOR TO THE UNITED NATIONS, RAOUL ROA. ACOSTA SUGGESTED THAT A REASONABLE VENUE WOULD BE THE DELEGATES DINING ROOM IN THE UNITED NATIONS SINCE "WE HAVE NOTHING TO HIDE. LET'S MEET OUT IN THE OPEN AMONGST OUR COLLEAGUES." AT THE LUNCHEON ROA EXPRESSED THANKS

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FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET WITH YOUNG ON HIS FIRST DAY AS THE HEAD OF CUBA'S DELEGATION TO THE UN. ROA AND ACOSTA INQUIRED ABOUT THE SUCCESS OF SECRETARY VANCE'S MOST RECENT TRIP TO AFRICA AND RHODESIA. YOUNG RESPONDED THAT IN GENERAL THE MEETINGS IN DAR ES SALAAM PRETORIA AND SALISBURY WERE HOPEFUL, BUT THE SITUATION WAS GETTING TO BE EXTREMELY SERIOUS AND THAT IN HIS OPINION PEACE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA DEPENDED GREATLY ON ALL OF THE PARTIES GETTING TOGETHER AND WORKING TOWARD A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT ALONG THE LINES OF THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSAL. YOUNG SAID THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT HAD CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT BUT IT WAS HARD TO DISCERN WHAT LEVEL OF SUPPORT THE PATRIOT FRONT OR THE INTERNAL GROUP HAD OUTSIDE OF THE CITIES.

3. ROA ASKED ABOUT A STATEMENT ATTRIBUTED TO PRESIDENT CARTER WHICH CHARACTERIZED THE CUBANS IN AFRICA AS MERCENARIES. HE ASKED IF THIS STATEMENT REPRESENTED A NEW ATTITUDE ON THE PART OF PRESIDENT CARTER WITH REGARD TO CUBA AND THE HOPE FOR NORMALIZING RELATIONS. ACOSTA ASKED ABOUT A REFERENCE IN PRESIDENT CARTER'S NIGERIA SPEECH TO CUBANS AS PROXIES IN ETHIOPIA. THE THRUST OF BOTH INQUIRIES SUGGEST THAT THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT IS ANALYZING THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT AS TO WHETHER OR NOT HIS LINE IS TOUGHENING CONCERNING CUBANS ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT. YOUNG STATED THAT HE DIDN'T THINK THAT WAS THE CONFIDENTIAL

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CASE, BUT THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS EXTREMELY CONCERNED ABOUT THE CUBAN ROLE IN AFRICA. ROA SAID CASTRO HAD DISPLAYED CONSIDERABLE RESTRAINT REGARDING AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY. HE ALSO STATED THAT THE BEST HOPE FOR THE U.S. IN INFLUENCING THE CUBAN ROLE IN AFRICA WAS THROUGH NORMALIZING U.S./CUBAN RELATIONS. HE SAID THERE WERE CERTAIN BASIC PRINCIPLES THAT COULD NEVER BE COMPROMISED BUT CERTAINLY AFTER THE LONG YEARS OF ECONOMIC BLOCKADES IT WAS CLEAR U.S. HAD NO EFFECT ON CUBAN FOREIGN POLICY, SO WHY NOT TRY RELATIONS.

4. ROA ASKED YOUNG IF HE THOUGHT THE CUBANS WERE SIMPLY PROXIES OF THE SOVIETS IN AFRICA. YOUNG REPLIED THAT HE DID NOT FEEL THAT WAS THE CASE IN ANGOLA BUT PROBABLY WAS TRUE IN ETHIOPIA. IN ANY EVENT THE TRUE TEST WOULD BE TO WATCH AND SEE WHAT THE CUBANS DID IN ERITREA. ROA QUICKLY RESPONDED THAT THE CUBANS WOULD NEVER BE A PARTY TO THE INVASION OF ERITREA. CUBA HAD STATED CLEARLY THAT IT FAVORED A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT AND PREFERRED SOME KIND OF FEDERATED THAT GIVES ERITREA SELF-DETERMINATION AND A NATIONAL VOICE. HE RECOUNTED CASTRO'S VISIT TO THE HORN IN AN ATTEMPT TO MEDIATE THE

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SOMALIA AND ETHIOPIA DISPUTE. HE SAID MEDIATION HAD FAILED. SIAD BARRE WAS CLEARLY THE AGGRESSOR AND THERE WAS NO QUESTION THAT SUCH AGGRESSION HAD TO BE REPELLED. "EVEN SO THE CUBANS PLAYED ESSENTIALLY A SUPPORT ROLE. THEIR CONTRIBUTION WAS TECHNICAL EXPERTISE AND THERE HAD ONLY BEEN A MINIMUM OF INFANTRY PERSONNEL ON THE FRONT LINES TO FACILITATE CLEAR COMMUNICATION BETWEEN SUPPORT BASES AND TANK BATTALIONS." HE ALSO SAID, "CUBAN POLICY REGARDING ERITREA IS CLEAR BUT REMEMBER THERE ARE SOME

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REACTIONARY FORCES SUPPORTING ERITREA, AND AN INDEPENDENT STATE IN NORTHERN ETHIOPIA WOULD END UP AS A PUPPET FOR THOSE REACTIONARY FORCES."

5. YOUNG INQUIRED ABOUT THE SITUATION IN ANGOLA AS TO WHETHER THE FIGHTING SITUATION WAS STABILIZING AND IF ROA SAW POTENTIAL FOR A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. ROA DOWNPLAYED THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FNLA AND SAVIMBI AND LIMITED HIS COMMENTS ON ANGOLA. AT THIS POINT ROA STATED THAT CASTRO WELCOMED A VISIT BY YOUNG WHEREBY THE TWO MIGHT TALK ABOUT NORMALIZING RELATIONS AND AFRICA ISSUES.

6. YOUNG RESPONDED THAT HE DIDN'T KNOW WHEN IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR HIM TO CONSIDER SUCH A VISIT. HOWEVER, HE WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS THE CUBAN ROLE IN AFRICA AND THAT HE LOOKED FORWARD TO CONTINUING CONVERSATIONS WITH ROA AT THE UNITED NATIONS. YOUNG SAID PERHAPS WE WOULD SEE A DAY IN THE FUTURE WHEN BOTH COUNTRIES COULD FOCUS

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ON DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA RATHER THAN ON TENSION AND
CONFLICT. IT WAS DEVELOPMENT THAT THE U.S. WAS COMMITTED
TO. ROA STATED THAT THAT WAS CUBA'S INTEREST IN AFRICA,
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ALSO, AND THEIR COMMITMENT. CASTRO HAD NOT RULED OUT THE
ROLE OF MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS IN DEVELOPMENT.
CERTAINLY MULTINATIONALS LIKE ITT IN CHILE HAD NO ROLE IN
THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES, BUT THAT MULTINATIONALS WHO COULD
COOPERATE WITH THE DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF THIRD WORLD
COUNTRIES WERE RECOGNIZED AS NECESSARY, AND CASTRO
WELCOMED THEM.

7. ROA SAID THE U.S. ATTITUDE REGARDING CUBAN FOREIGN
POLICY WAS COLORED BY OLD COLONIAL ATTITUDES, AND HE MADE
REFERENCE TO AN AUTHOR WHO IN 1935 WROTE OF CUBA AS A
COLONY OF THE UNITED STATES. ROA SUGGESTED THAT YOUNG
SHOULD READ THE PUBLICATION. ROA SAID THERE WAS AN
OBSESSION WITH CUBA THAT WAS NOT SEE REGARDING LARGER
NATIONS.

8. COMMENT: YOUNG THINKS THAT CASTRO AND THE CUBAN
GOVERNMENT ARE GIVING CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION TO PRESIDENT
CARTER'S MOST RECENT STATEMENTS CONCERNING
CUBAN INVOLVEMENT IN AFRICA. THE CUBANS GENERALLY SEEM
TO REGARD CARTER AS A MORAL MAN WHO IS PREPARED TO LESSEN
TENSIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. LIKEWISE THEY FEEL
THAT CASTRO HAS EXERCISED CONSIDERABLE RESTRAINT
WITH REGARD TO CONDEMNING RHETORIC DIRECTED AT THE U.S.
THEY CAUTION THAT IT'S A MISTAKE TO DRUM UP HARD AND
NEGATIVE DOMESTIC ATTITUDES TOWARD NORMALIZING RELATIONS.
THEY FEAR THAT PRESIDENT CARTER WILL FIND HIMSELF
CAPTIVE OF CONSERVATIVE DOMESTIC OPINION AND WILL
FORESTALL RELATIONS.

9. PLEASE CORRECT: PAGE 3, PARA 4, LINE 9 TO READ:
PREFERRED SOME KIND OF FEDERATION THAT GIVES ERITREA.
PLEASE CORRECT: PAGE 4, PARA 7, LINE 6 TO READ: OBSESSION
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WITH CUBA THAT WAS NOT SEEN REGARDING LARGER. YOUNG

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